

From Egg to Salamander

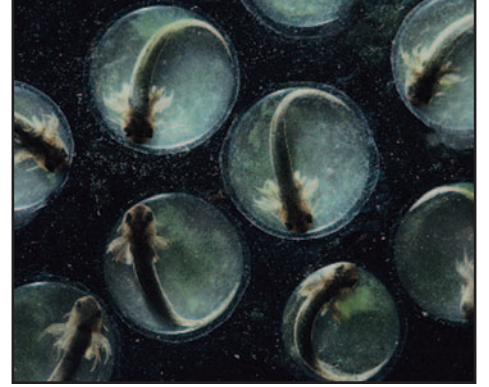
A salamander is an amphibian. This means that it lives on land and in the water. Most kinds of salamanders lay their eggs in a pond. Here is its life cycle from egg to salamander.



1. On the first rainy night in spring, a mother spotted salamander travels from her winter burrow to a shallow pond. She lays a bunch of eggs. They cling to the stem of an underwater plant.



2. Inside each egg, a baby salamander is growing. Can you see this little salamander's head? Can you see its tail?



3. Salamander eggs aren't hard like chicken eggs. Clear, sticky jelly covers and protects the eggs. The yolk of each egg provides food for the baby salamanders, which are called larvae.



4. When the larvae are big enough, they break through their eggs. They have long, flat tails to help them swim and feathery gills for breathing underwater.



5. But this spotted salamander won't always live in the pond. Its body is changing, getting ready for when it will leave its watery home to live on land. First, its front legs grow.



6. Then its back legs appear. As its legs grow longer and stronger, the salamander's tail gets skinnier. Its body is changing inside, too.



Now the spotted salamander is full grown. She has lungs for breathing air and four strong legs to scurry about looking for worms. She will live under leaves and logs on the forest floor. Then, one spring night, she will return to the pond to lay eggs of her own.

Photographs by Dwight Kuhn